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imagery analysis report

# South African Military Activity at Grootfontein Namibia (S)

**Secret** 

WNINTEL

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#### SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY ACTIVITY AT GROOTFONTEIN, NAMIBIA (S)

#### **INTRODUCTION**

2. (S/D) Installations along the Angolan border from Grootfontein are accessible by two all-weather, dual-lane roads (Figure 1). One road leads northwest from Grootfontein through Tsumeb to Ondangua, Oshakati, and other installations in Ovamboland. A second road connects Grootfontein with the air and ground force facility at Runtu in Okavangoland and also joins the improved road which runs parallel to the border and extends eastward to Katima Mulilo in the Caprivi Strip.

#### Grootfontein Airfield

3.	(S/D)	Grootfo	ntein Airf	ield is on	e of five	jet-capable	airfields	in north	ern N	amibia.	The
			Ruacana				Ondangua (	_Airfield			
	Airfield				acha Airfic			_ The air			
tein is	a joint	civil and	d military	facility w	vith suppo	rt and rep	air facilit	ies comp	arable	to thos	e at
major	military	airfields	in the R	epublic o	of South A	Africa. A	comparati	ve view o	of the	airfield	and
army c	amp as t	hey appe	ared on in	nagery in	1971 and 1	979 is shov	vn in Figu	res 2 and	3.		

#### Runway and Taxiway Construction

4. (S/D) A new asphalt and concrete runway, approximately 3,660 by 45 meters and first identified under construction in April 1976, is now complete and operational. This runway can accommodate all aircraft currently in service with the South African Air Force or the Republic's civil airlines, South African Airways. The original asphalt runway has been extended to the same length as the new runway and now serves as a parallel taxiway. A new asphalt runway, perpendicular to the main runway and 1,200 by 30 meters, has been constructed atop an original gravel runway.

#### Military Support and Parking Areas

5. (S/D) A military support area has been built east of the civil terminal area and north of the midpoint of the parallel taxiway (Figures 3 and 4). Parking facilities consist of a large asphalt and concrete parking apron, connected by two link taxiways to the parallel taxiway and main runway. One large maintenance hangar, 15 maintenance and support buildings, and one operations/control tower are in the military support area. An ammunition storage area that appears to serve both the airfield and the military camp is 0.5 nm northeast of the military support area at the airfield. The storage area is secured (Continued p. 6)

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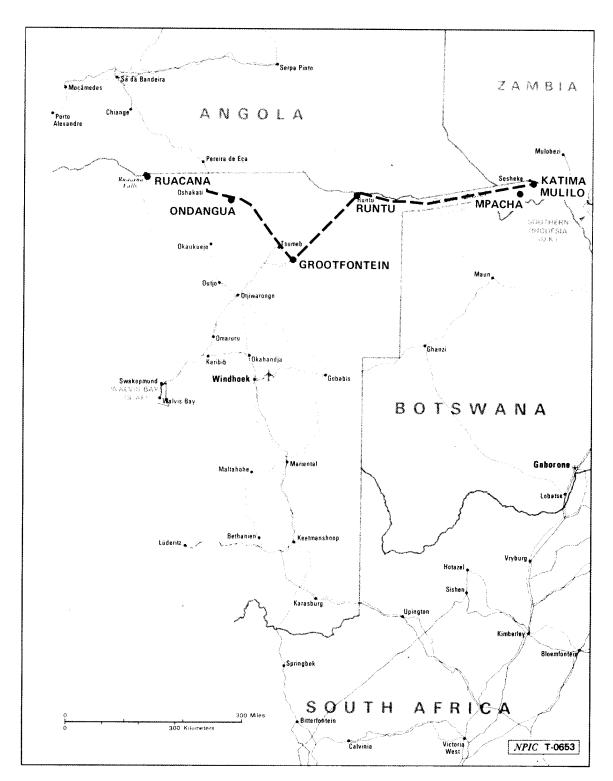
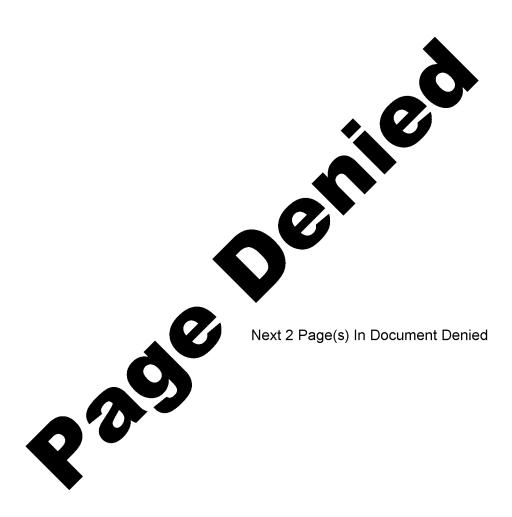


FIGURE 1. SELECTED SOUTH AFRICAN INSTALLATIONS IN NORTHERN NAMIBIA

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by a double fence and consists of at least 80 earth-covered quonset buildings in groups of eight and at least 11 additional revetted, drive-by storage bays in an early stage of construction.

#### Air Activity

6. (S/D) The level of air activity observed since January 1978 has remained fairly constant. Military transport aircraft—including C-47 (Dakota), C-130 (military), and C-160 (Transall; not shown on graphic)—and L-100 aircraft of Safair, a partially government-owned cargo airline, were routinely observed either in the military support area (Figure 4) or on the expanded parking apron adjacent to the civil terminal (Figure 3). These aircraft were apparently involved in the transportation of supplies from South Africa to Grootfontein and other airfields in the BOA. On at least two separate dates in 1979, personnel were observed embarking/disembarking from an L-100 with Safair markings. This might have been a rotation of units assigned to the BOA. While fighter aircraft have routinely been seen at Ondangua and Mpacha Airfields since late 1978, combat aircraft were not observed assigned permanently to Grootfontein, and the occasional observation of such aircraft as a Mirage F-1 during June 1979 was probably due to a need for maintenance support.

#### Grootfontein Army Camp

7. (S/D) This installation has been expanded from a small tent camp in the early 1970s to the largest and most modern ground force installation in Namibia. It serves as a logistical and support base for the South African presence in the BOA. The installation consists of four functional areas—an administration and barracks area, a rail transfer depot, a vehicle storage and maintenance area, and a POL storage area (Figure 5).

#### Administration and Barracks Area

8. (S/D) The administration and barracks area consists of a multiwing headquarters/administration building, 37 barracks/quarters, one probable hospital/dispensary, one auditorium, 16 support buildings, and extensive recreational facilities including two swimming pools, tennis courts, and rugby and cricket fields. There are, in addition, two tent camps (items a and b, Figure 5) within the barracks area that probably serve as transit quarters for personnel enroute to or returning from duty on the border. An auxiliary vehicle park (item c) which contains a wide range of cargo trucks and other wheeled vehicles is on the southeast edge of the administration and barracks area.

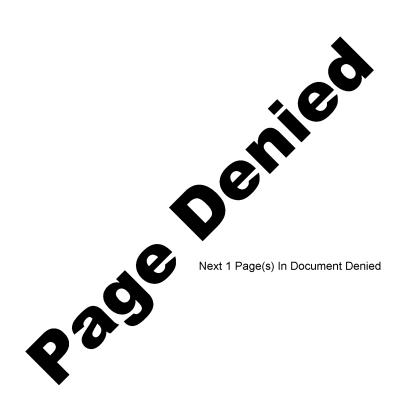
#### Rail Transfer Depot

9. (S/D) The rail transfer depot serves as the loading/offloading point for vehicles and other military equipment or supplies being transferred between Namibia and the Republic. Such activity was observed when at least 52 Eland armored cars were seen on either the loading dock or on flatcars (16 Elands are shown on graphic). The number of Elands observed closely equates to the table of organization and equipment of a South African armored car regiment.

#### Vehicle Storage and Maintenance Area

10. (S/D) The primary vehicle storage and maintenance area consists of three subareas (Figure 5). The vehicle storage area (item d) is adjacent to the rail transfer depot and includes four vehicle storage sheds and a large, open parking area. Frequent photographic coverage of the transfer depot and this vehicle park provides a useful indicator of build-up and increased activity

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by the South Africans in northern Namibia. A separately secured vehicle maintenance area (item e) is adjacent to the vehicle storage area. This is the largest such facility in Namibia and probably serves a third echelon repair function for the BOA. The third portion of the vehicle storage and maintenance area (item f) is an administration/barracks/motor pool area for motor transport units assigned to the army camp.

#### **POL Storage Area**

11. (S/D) The POL storage area is served by a dual-rail siding of the Namibian/South African rail network and supports both the airfield and army camp. Storage facilities consist of three medium vertical tanks, four small vertical tanks, six small horizontal tanks, and open storage of probable 55-gallon POL drums.

# DOCUMENT 1. NPIC. IAR-0001/80, South African Military Activity in Northern Namibia, 1978—1979 (S), Jan 80 (TOP SECRET CODEWORD \*Extracted information is classified SECRET/WNINTEL.

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